

**THE
AUSTRALIAN
HERPETOLOGICAL
SOCIETY
JOURNAL**

AUSTRALIAN HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

PATRON

Mr. Eric Worrell M.B.E.

LIFE MEMBERS

H.G. Cogger, M.Sc., Ph.D.

R. MacKay

OFFICE BEARERS 1972-73

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Meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday night of each month at 8 p.m. 1st Floor, Parramatta Town Hall.

All correspondence to be addressed to:-

The Correspondence Secretary,
263 Harbord Road,
DEE WHY. N.S.W. 2099.

COVER - Common Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja textilis t.*)

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HERPETOFAUNA

VOL. 5 NO. 1

MAY 1972.CONTENTS

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THE BREEDING OF PHYSIGNATHUS LESUEURII L.

IN CAPTIVITY

By Merv. Hay

I was very interested in Judy Caughley's notes on "Bearded Dragons in their Natural Habitat" in the November edition of Herpetofauna.

I now offer for comparison my studies of Water Dragons in captivity.

I have had the male dragon for 14 years and it has been breeding with 5 females, 3 of these its own offspring, for a number of years now. The first female was collected at Lane Cove in 1959. It was a fully grown adult, and is still breeding.

Breeding Season

The breeding season is from October to December, the young appearing in January to mid April. They generally lay their eggs between 3 p.m. - 6 p.m. Two specimens are recorded as depositing two clutches this season. Possibly this has happened before but unnoticed. An average clutch consists of 8 - 10 eggs, however, one female that layed two clutches had 17 eggs on the 29th October, 1971 and 15 eggs on the 9th December, 1971. These eggs were smaller in size than a clutch of 8 - 10 eggs would be.

About 3 days before laying, these lizards begin digging their nesting sites, usually anything from three to six holes in different positions around the cage. They only use the one hole. The hole would be about 6-8 inches deep. As each egg is deposited it is covered up with a little soil and packed down with the nose. All eggs are hatched under natural conditions.

This year 85 eggs have been laid. As in the past the hatchlings will be released.

Growth

Here is the growth rate of a female born on the 24th March, 1966.

April, 1967	measured	8 inches
March, 1968	"	10 "
April, 1969	"	13 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
January, 1970	"	17 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
January, 1971	"	23 "

Water Dragons, unlike the Bearded Dragon, begin breeding at 5 years of age. This has been recorded in three instances.

Another point of interest is the colouration of two dragons that were bred here. These dragons resemble *Physignathus l. howittii*. Colour is quite greenish, slightly yellow around the throat and a complete absence of the black streak from the eye through the laterals. Their parents are typical Water Dragons in colour. The male was collected at Wentworth Falls and female from Lane Cove.

Territorial Behaviour

The male, and females too at various times, displays head bobbing and the waving of the front legs at any time of the year, although more so in the breeding season.

On several occasions over the years, I have introduced other males into the cage, but both young and adult alike all end up the same way. The old male, "George" as he is nicknamed, relentlessly pursues them, whether in the breeding season or not. He usually begins by biting their tails. All these males have had to be released, except one which he killed.

At the moment I have a large Gippsland, which has managed to stay away from the old fellow, due to the new arrangement of the cage. However, I am keeping an eye on them just the same.

S A M M Y

A Shingleback Lizard in captivity.....

by Mrs. P.M. Patience

Most people apparently have no success in keeping a Shingleback lizard in captivity. According to the Reptile keepers at Melbourne Zoo we have had unbelievable luck in doing so. However, I must first say that I feel Sammy adjusted himself to domesticity and has obviously changed his natural way of life to one almost identical with our other domestic pets, also we have no idea whether the reptile is male or female although we call it Sammy and refer to it as he. He arrived at our home at the end of 1968 and is now in his fourth year with us. For the first two, three months he would not eat and drank very little and would hiss and back-off if we attempted to touch him. Then quite suddenly his attitude towards us changed and he showed a most definite preference to spending his days inside the house. He has a sunbathe in the garden early each morning for a couple of hours but prefers to eat, drink and exercise inside the house. We have never confined him (except for his sun period) and he always puts himself into his bed when he is ready to go, this being a cardboard box on its side with a towel in it. He also likes to sleep under a piece of brown paper behind the T.V. Whilst we give him an assortment of food - chopped steak, lettuce, banana, tomato etc., he has always shown a preference for the banana, and will not consider such things as snails, blossoms, grass etc., but appears to drink a lot of water.

He keeps quite appalling hours sometimes going to bed about 5 p.m. and other times nearer midnight. If we come home late apparently we wake him up and he will take a walk around the lounge room. He does not object to being handled and will sit on our knee and get his head scratched for any length of time. Another point of interest with him is that he does not hibernate at all and sheds his skin twice a year.

He is very active, far more so than Eric our blue tongue (named after Mr. Eric Worrell). We have a porch on two levels at the back of our house and he spends hours a day climbing up and down the step whereas Eric seems content to sun himself or stay in bed. Six months ago we had near disaster with him, he

enjoys sitting on the carpet near an electric heater and although he does not get any direct heat apparently the moisture in the carpet gave him scale rot. When we first noticed the pale pink markings on his stomach we took him to the Melbourne Zoo where they diagnosed scale rot, we then had to go to a vet to get the necessary drugs. We were very fortunate in our choice of vet as he told us he had treated reptiles with some success for this complaint and said that Sammy was in such good condition that he felt we could save him. The treatment was tedious but we persevered twice a day and the reptile has recovered. We now have to put a thick piece of brown paper down in front of the heater to absorb the moisture but have also been told to keep Sammy away from it altogether if possible.

He must be the most travelled lizard in the world because when we go on holidays, usually up North, he always comes with us. He flies to Sydney (T.A.A. being ignorant of their extra passenger) and then travels by car up the coast, he stays in the various motels, puts himself to bed behind a curtain and eats every day and has his exercise. Our other pets go into board, but we will never trust anyone with Sammy. We have had three other Shingleback lizards and although they have all received exactly the same care they unfortunately died within eight or nine months, this is why I am so positive that this one has adjusted himself and I do not think we will ever be as successful again in keeping one for so long.

While we have had endless interest and enjoyment from having Sammy live with us I am strongly against these small reptiles being sold indiscriminately by pet shops to children as both they and their parents are generally quite ignorant in how to care for them and so are the pet shop proprietors in many cases. I have found the Melbourne Zoo Reptile Keepers both courteous and helpful in giving their advice but there is so much to learn about these creatures that many thousands of them must perish once they are sold to a reptile ignorant public.

NEW MEMBERS

Miss B. Baker 81 Soldiers Road,
 JANNALI. N.S.W. 2226.

M. Berry P.O. Box 310,
 LAE. T.P.N.G.

Interests: Snakes of the world.

J. Bevan 39 Chaucer Crescent,
 CANTERBURY. VIC. 3126.

Interests: All aspects of Herpetology.

R. Chamberlain 64 Hampden Avenue,
 WAHROONGA. N.S.W. 2076.

Interests: Reptiles.

W.D. Craig 131 Moosehead Boulevard,
 Bangor, Maine,
 U.S.A. 04401.

Interests: Snakes and their diseases and cures.

J. Dixon 13 Marlo Street,
 TOWRADGI. N.S.W. 2518.

Interests: Lizards.

M. Fairhurst 23 Charlotte Street,
 DUNDAS. N.S.W. 2117.

R. Forster C/- Farrer High School,
 Calala,
 Via TAMWORTH. N.S.W. 2340.

Interests: Snakes and lizards.

Miss N. Frankham 166 Fairnborough Heights,
 UNANDERRA. N.S.W. 2826.

Interests: Lizards.

E. Freys 33 Lackey Street,
 GRANVILLE. N.S.W. 2142.

Interests: Pythons

S. Groom 3 Joyce Avenue,
 GLEN WAVERLEY. VIC. 3150.

Interests: Australian lizards and snakes.

C. Hobden 3 Vista Street,
 CARINGBAH. N.S.W. 2229.

Interests: Tortoises and lizards.

G. Hughes 4 Thalton Street,
 CARLINGFORD. N.S.W. 2118.

Interests: Reptiles.

A. Johnson 86 Walters Road,
 BLACKTOWN. N.S.W. 2148.

Interests: Snakes and lizards.

R. Jurak 8 Finisterre Avenue,
 MT. DRUITT. N.S.W. 2770.

R. Lilley 209 Tyler Street,
 EAST PRESTON. VIC. 3072.

Interests: Taxonomy, ecology etc of reptiles and amphibians.

B. Lyon 178 Bilsen Road,
 WAVELL HEIGHTS. QLD. 4012.

Interests: All aspects of Herpetology.

P. Maczi 8 View Street,
 SEFTON. N.S.W. 2162.

Interests: Frogs, toads, lizards and snakes.

B. Roberts 6 Miller Street,
 SOUTH GRANVILLE. N.S.W. 2142.

B. Routledge 1 Rippon Avenue,
 DUNDAS. N.S.W. 2117.

Interests: Lizards and some venomous snakes.

W. Schofield Oxley High School,
 TAMWORTH. N.S.W. 2340.

Interests: Taxonomy, ecology and conservation.

C. Sinclair 53 Robertson Street,
 GUILDFORD WEST. N.S.W. 2161.

Interests: Lizards.

G. Sinclair 53 Robertson Street,
 GUILDFORD WEST. N.S.W. 2161.

Interests: Lizards.

A. Sokol 7 Roma Street,
 BENTLEIGH. VIC. 3204.

Interests: Lizards and snakes.

Miss J.K. Tilbrook St. Hilda's College,
 PARKVILLE. VIC. 3052.

Interests: Dragons, geckoes and monitors.

T. Watson 74 Brenan Street,
 SMITHFIELD. N.S.W. 2164.

Interests: Reptiles.

G. White 32 Dublin Street,
 SMITHFIELD. N.S.W. 2164.

Interests: Small snakes.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Australian Herpetological Society was held at the Australian Reptile Park, Gosford, on Saturday the 22nd April. The meeting was attended by thirty-five members, and commenced at 2 p.m. The Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting were read and adopted. This was followed by a Report from the President and a statement on the financial affairs of the Society by the Secretary-Treasurer. The remainder of the meeting was taken up with an address by Mr. Fred Hersey, an officer of the National Parks and Wildlife Service on the impending Reptile Protection Legislation in New South Wales. At the completion of the Meeting group photographs were taken.

We would like to express our thanks to Mr. Eric Worrell for making available the facilities of the Australian Reptile Park and for attending the Meeting.

We should also like to thank Mr. Fred Hersey for his Address.

The Report and Financial Statements are set out below.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDED 30TH APRIL, 1972.

<u>Expenditure</u>		<u>Income</u>
Stationery	27.30	Subscriptions -
Postage	15.50	Junior 54.00
Hire of Hall	75.50	Senior 180.00
Miscellaneous	22.38	Married Couples 18.00
Prov. for replacement of Library Books	10.00	Overseas 6.00
		<u>258.00</u>
Surplus for Year - to Accum. Members' Fund	152.76	Less Subs. in Advance <u>97.00</u> 161.00
		Admission Charges 48.78
		Raffles 27.55
		Profit on Sales 66.11
	<hr/> <u>\$303.44</u>	<hr/> <u>\$303.44</u>

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS

<u>Cash</u>		<u>Expenses Paid</u>	140.68
In Hand 1st May, 1971	33.60	<u>Purchases</u>	
Subscriptions Received	258.00	- Badges, Cable etc.	139.89
<u>Sales</u>		- Books	46.98
- Badges, Cable etc.	160.21	<u>Cash</u>	
- Books	47.77	At Bank 30th April, 1972	188.95
Meeting Receipts	76.33	In Hand 30th April, 1972	9.41
		Library Books	50.00
	<u><u>\$575.91</u></u>		<u><u>\$575.91</u></u>
	<u><u>=====</u></u>		<u><u>=====</u></u>

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30TH APRIL, 1972.

Accumulated Members' Fund-		Assets-	
As at 1st May, 1971	33.60	Library	50.00
Surplus for year	152.76	Less prov. for replacement	10.00
	<u>=====</u>		<u>=====</u>
	186.36		40.00
Subscriptions in Advance	97.00	Badges	5.00
		Heating Cable	15.00
		Dri Die	10.00
		Books	15.00
			<u>=====</u>
			45.00
		Cash	9.41
		Bank	188.95
	<u>=====</u>		<u>=====</u>
	\$283.36		\$283.36
	<u>=====</u>		<u>=====</u>

REPORT ON THE AFFAIRS OF THE
AUSTRALIAN HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30-4-72.

This year has been one of unprecedented growth for the Society. For the first time, Membership has exceeded one hundred. The Committee has endeavoured to carry out three functions during the year. These were:-

1. Membership
2. Meetings
3. Magazine

Membership

As mentioned above, membership now exceeds one hundred, the total of members being one hundred and twelve. One of the most encouraging aspects is the increase of members outside of Sydney and outside of New South Wales. We hope that in Victoria particularly, it may be possible to form a separate Branch, with its own meeting etc. Our special thanks go to the Staff of the Australian Reptile Park, particularly Mrs. Abra, who has continually publicised the Society.

Meetings

Our meeting place is now established at the Parramatta Town Hall, which provides ample room and adequate facilities. Attendance has improved considerably, with average attendance per meeting being thirty-seven. Efforts have been made to provide a more varied Agenda at the meetings and this is now producing results. We feel that these meetings are once more achieving their objective of being a central point where people can gather to exchange information and ideas of a herpetological nature. We would like to express our thanks to Mrs. Lowe for her work in providing the supper at these meetings.

Magazine

Special efforts have been made to produce a suitable magazine particularly with the many more members who cannot attend meetings. The Magazine has expanded from a few roneoed sheets to a printed, twenty-four page Journal, complete with cover. Contributions from members are increasing, and we hope that these will continue. Circulation of the Magazine is one hundred and fifty.

Financial Statement

The financial position of the Society is set out separately, but it is gratifying to see that our finances have improved to the point where considerably more funds can be allocated to Library purchases during the coming year.

Library

Purchases totalling \$50.00 were made during the year. The Committee feels that while books of a more popular nature should continue to be purchased, we should consider aquisition of more technical works and scientific journals not generally available.

Field Trips

Three official field trips were run during the year. These were within the Sydney area and were mainly of a lighthearted nature to enable members to get together. Consideration should be given to surveys of a more serious nature in the coming year.

Badges

The Society's badge was re-designed and produced during the year. Sales have been steady and further supplies will have to be obtained during the coming year.

Other Facilities

Heating Cables, Thermostats, Specimen Bags, Dri-Die, Mouse Cages and Books have been made available to Members at reduced rates during the year.

Conclusion

The year has proved to be invigorating and rewarding for the Society, however, the coming year will be one of far greater challenge. If the Society is to establish itself as THE Australian Herpetological Society, it is dependant on all Members asking themselves not only what the Society can do for them, but also, what they can do for the Society.

* * * * *

Their tapeworms indicate that Monitor Lizards are related to Python snakes -

Comparative parasitology has now been used as evidence on the degree of affinity between different hosts. The parasite, especially if internal, lives in a habitat where the factors are so constant that its tempo of evolution is much slower than that of the host. Therefore parasites of different hosts can show similarities and affinities while their hosts, which are exposed to changing conditions in freelifing habitats, and therefore have evolved faster, may show none or few. (Extract from Oxford Biology Reader I - 1971).

THE FEEDING OF SNAKES IN CAPTIVITY

PART I

BY DOUG ADAMS

Snakes feed entirely on other animals. No vegetable matter is eaten.

It is important to know what animals are likely to be eaten. Lizards would probably head the snakes list of mouth-watering delicacies. Skinks are especially liked by snakes. Some of the skinks are common and it is no great problem for the herpetologist to collect them on his field trips. In Sydney, Water Skinks are readily collected at creeks and ponds. These lizards are of a size suitable to be fed to large venomous snakes. Small venomous snakes can be fed on the small garden skinks. Geckos also can be fed to snakes.

Frogs would be second on the list of snake food. All the big venomous snakes eat frogs. However, not all the smaller venomous snakes eat them.

Mamals and marsupials also form a large part of the snakes diet, especially in the Pythons; most species of which definitely prefer warm-blooded prey. It is usually necessary for the keeper of Pythons to breed mice or rats to feed his snakes. All the large venomous snakes eat mice and small rats. So the keeper of these snakes too, usually decides to breed mice for snake food.

Birds are included in the diet of some snakes, notably the climbing types such as some of the Pythons and the Brown Tree Snake. In the wild state, the larger venomous snakes, because they live on the ground, probably do not have the opportunity to catch many birds. However, in captivity these large snakes can be fed on freshly killed birds.

I have just mentioned the four most commonly eaten types of animals, however, as is well known, snakes will also eat other types of animals such as eels, fish, tadpoles, other snakes and insects.

In snakes the teeth are not designed for chewing; all food is swallowed whole. The snakes' jaws and skin are designed for stretching and animals larger than the snakes own head can easily be swallowed.

As to the quantity of food to be given. For local snakes kept without heating I can see no harm in feeding them all they can eat. If excess weight is put on during Summer, this will be lost over the Winter when they voluntarily do not feed. However, snakes kept in heated cages all year round should not be allowed to grow ridiculously fat.

A time-saving way to feed snakes is to set aside the same night each week as the feeding night. Thus all other nights of the week are left free for other activities. Snakes take about five days to digest their food, so once a week is an excellent feeding timetable. Another way to save time is to stop mucking about feeding lots of small food items to the snakes. Give them a single animal that is close to the maximum size that they can swallow.

Some snakes when first caught will not eat. They do not feel at home in their new surroundings, and need some time to settle down. How long they remain off their food is variable - sometimes days, sometimes months. The long fasts are exceptions though, overall I have had little trouble getting snakes to eat.

If a snake refuses to eat and starts to lose condition it is a good idea to let it go, provided it is released in an area where the species occurs naturally. Otherwise give it away to someone who thinks he can feed it. Bear in mind though,

that if you catch a snake during the Winter, you can't expect it to eat until the warmer weather. I think it will be appropriate here to quote some dates. These dates are for snakes kept in Sydney without heating.

Type of Snake	Last Meal Before Cold Months	First Meal After Cold Months
Juvenile Diamond Python	18.5.66.	14. 9.66.
Adult Diamond Python	4.6.66.	30.11.66.
Adult Whip Snake (<i>Psammophis</i>)	29.5.66.	Approx. early Sept.

As well as not eating over the cold months, snakes also do not eat for a few weeks prior to shedding their skin. Examples of this are given below:-

Type of Snake	Date of Last Meal prior to Shedding	Date Skin Shed	Difference in Days
Adult Diamond Python	6. 9.65.	14.10.65.	34
As above	29.12.66.	16. 1.67.	18
Juvenile Diamond Python	7.12.65.	25.12.65.	18
As above	6. 2.66.	10. 2.66.	4
As above	6. 3.66.	25. 3.66.	19
As above	14. 9.66.	25.10.66.	41
As above	19.12.66.	1. 1.67.	14
As above	14. 2.67.	26. 2.67.	12
2nd Juvenile Diamond	12. 1.67.	16. 1.67.	4
As above	31. 1.67.	19. 2.67.	19
Broad-Headed Snake	3. 1.66.	4. 1.66.	1
2nd Broad-Head	13.10.66.	21.11.66.	39
As above	12.12.66.	16. 1.66.	35

Adult Whip Snake	8.11.65.	30.11.65.	22
As above	5. 4.66.	12. 4.66.	7

The average is 19 days. The variation is from 1 to 41 days.

Having discussed when snakes don't eat, we now come to when they do eat. By far the most notable time that snakes are hungry and willing to eat is after they have shed their skin. The effect of the appetite is immediate; food can be given the moment the snake has finished shedding. If at all possible, snakes should be presented with food within the first few days following shedding.

Another factor in feeding is that some snakes prefer to eat during the day, while others prefer to feed after nightfall. More information on this is contained in the table at the end of this article.

We now come to the question of whether to feed live or dead food. One advantage of using live food is that should your snake refuse to eat, you can remove the food-animal and keep it for a later attempt. There's no sense in wasting food that you spent time and money acquiring. Another reason to feed live, is that some snakes definitely prefer their food that way. The keeper of snakes will soon observe that movement of the prey can be a big factor in the feeding sequences of certain species.

Some snakes start out in captivity feeding on only live food. Others will take dead food straight away. Their habits are variable. However, after a time in captivity, most snakes can be changed to a diet of dead food if you so wish.

If you are short of the snakes normal food, you could try feeding them strips of meat. This is usually not a straightforward procedure however, because the meat lacks a familiar scent that the snake is accustomed to. I have placed strips of meat in front of a hungry snake, and he has been unable to recognise it as food, and has paid no attention to it.

to be continued.

PROGRAM FOR 1972.

- 15. 6.72. Speaker from National Parks and Wildlife Services
- 20. 7.72. Dr. G. Grigg - Frogs of N.S.W.
- 17. 8.72. Mr. H. Hirschorn - Reptile Diseases.
- 21. 9.72. Film Evening
- 22.10.72. Mrs. L. Moffat - Classification of Reptiles
- 16.11.72. Members Night
- 21.12.72. Christmas Night

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COMPETITION RESULTS

Several entries were received for the 1st competition on articles for the Journal. The judge, Dr. Cogger, was impressed by the quality of the articles submitted and the prize of \$25 has been awarded to -

Mr. Merv Hay for his article on the
Breeding of Physignathus lesueurii l.
in Captivity.

We hope to see many more articles for the next competition which will also carry a cash prize. Entries close on 15th October, 1972.

THE BURWOOD GOANNA

The Society recently received a request to investigate a complaint that a large reptile was loose in the Burwood area. Society member Trevor Senior reports:-

"On Tuesday, 14th March a resident of Wentworth Road, Burwood woke from a midday nap to the sound of scratching outside her window. She parted the curtains to find the lace monitor for which I'd been searching over the past few weeks. Council workers up the street heard screams and ran down the road to see what was wrong. Two workers attempted to catch the monitor in a clothes basket but it freed itself and climbed a six foot fence.

Eventually it was caught, the only casualties being a few pot plants. The monitor was taken to Burwood Works Depot - where the fun began all over again. The monitor was placidly in a sack on the floor when two reporters arrived and wanted to take a picture of it. During the "unveiling ceremony" it freed itself again. It headed for an office, did a sharp u-turn and bolted for pipes and trucks, where it was recaptured. That Tuesday night the parks superintendent intended to release the reptile out in the bush. He stopped at Ryde Horticultural Park - and that's right - it escaped again. The parks superintendent said "there is plenty of room for him there so the issue won't be pursued."

NOTES ON THE BIRTH OF RED-BELLIED
BLACK SNAKES - W. SCHOFIELD

I was fortunate to obtain from society member Kevin Jacobson, a large Gravid female Black Snake (Red-Bellied).

The snake had been captured about a week previously at Nemingah (near Tamworth). At the time of capture, one young snake was born dead, Kevin says its head appeared "large for the body size" - it was born in an egg sac.

Nine eggs were laid on the 10th March and a summary of my note book from then on follows.

"Female red-bellied black snake, docile, very fat, held easily by the tail, folds of loose skin after egg laying and a little harder to handle. Could bring head up high but never struck or lunged - some hissing and neck flattening. Length about 125 cm, weight after eggs laid 428 g.

Eggs laid between 1.00 p.m. and 9.00 a.m. on the 10th March, 1972. The last egg was being laid at 9.00 a.m. A shallow hole had been hollowed in sand in the box and the snake was coiled around the eggs and one dead young one. The egg membranes were quite transparent and strong reflexes were noted in the young snakes within the egg when prodded gently.

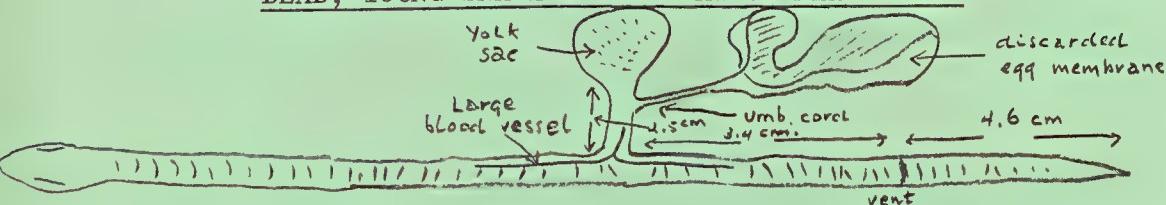
The eggs were taken immediately from the mother and details noted (see chart 1), they were then placed in a moist warm chamber on wet filter paper.

Chart 1

Weight(g)	Length(cm)	Notes (10.3.72.)
22.5	6.2 x 3.7	Strong reflex movements.
24.5	5.8	Size of yolk sac varied,
22.5	6.5	from large to small.
22.5	5.6	Fluid in eggs very clear
22.5	6.0	and red blood vessels seen
19.0	6.0	easily.
24.5	6.0	
+ 16.5	6.2	+ Possibly broken - dead
16.5	5.5	

Table 1. (9 eggs at birth) + Dead snake (Below), + one born 2 weeks earlier = Total 11.

DEAD, YOUNG SNAKE HATCHED AT OR NEAR BIRTH



- 12.3.72: 8 young snakes successfully hatched. Easily handled, umbilical cord still attached. Young snakes lively and healthy. Discarded egg sacs still moist and fresh.
- 13.3.72: Umbilical cord still attached. Small skink placed in cage for feed, not eaten.
- 14.3.72:

Weight(g)	Length (cm)	Notes
10.40	27.2	
10.62	28.6	
10.47	28.1	Variability of anal scales
10.12	27.0	noted
9.94	27.9	
10.08	28.9	
10.20	27.8	
11.64	30.2	

- 15.3.72: Skins a bit loose.
- 16.3.72: Skin looks poor - eyes translucent.
- 20.3.72: Eyes very blue/grey. Skins "loose". Very quiet. Belly colour very pale.
- 21.3.72: Eyes black again. Still pale underneath belly. Skin still loose. One losing skin from tip to tail.

21.3.72: (Contd)

TOT. LENGTH cm.	Weight g.	TAIL LENGTH cm	ANAL SCALES
31.0	10.18	5.0	
29.0	9.84	4.9	
29.0	9.76	5.0	
29.0	10.02	4.5	
30.0	9.78	4.7	
30.1	9.52	4.8	
28.6	10.14	4.6	
31.0	10.14	5.5	

(N.B. The snakes appeared to eat nothing though food was offered.)

27.3.72: Skins completely sloughed and young snakes look black and shiny. Bellies look more orange red than previously.

These studies were done by myself assisted by Terry Harvey of the Oxley High School Herpetological Club. The reptiles are now in the hands of Peter Rankin (a Herp. Soc. Member of Sydney), and the mother snake in Eric Worrell's Black Snake Pit.

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SNAKES AND LADDERS

Our overseas correspondent reports -

A juvenile European natrix natrix was placed in a cloth bag while its cage was being cleaned. When the snake was about to be put back it was found that it had suffocated due to it being caught by the head in the elastic used to close the bag. Artificial respiration was attempted through a straw and after 20 minutes the animal revived.

SNAKES AND LADDERS (Contd)

"While collecting two-lined Dragons (*Diporiphora bilineata*), Striped Skinks (*Ctenotus l. lesueurii*) and White's Skinks (*Egernia whitii*) from a grassy area 5 miles from Tamworth which is riddled with granite heaps and barky trees, I came upon a Children's Python. It measured 2 feet 5 inches in December, 1971 and is now 2 feet 6.2 inches. I found it under a large, perpendicular slab of granite and the same area is populated by Brown and Black snakes, Yellow-faced Whip snakes, Coral snakes and sometimes Carpet snakes, Lace and Gould's monitors and many skinks, geckos (including Barking Geckos (*Gymnodactylus mili*)) and some dragons".

"In captivity the Children's Python (*Liasis childreni*) feeds almost entirely on the skinks found in the area but sometimes accepts Water Skinks (*Sphenomorphus quoyii*). It rejects dragons, geckos, mice, birds and frogs. When I consulted references etc., for information, all of them gave the distribution as 'North Australia', 'north of a line extending from Brisbane to Perth' etc., which in my opinion leaves Tamworth out. The Barking Gecko is supposed to be found in the Southern States but it is found up here also."

SNAKES AND LADDERS (Contd)

One of our members reports a 20" Pale Headed Snake (*Hoplocephalus bitorqualis*) displaying cannibalistic tendencies by eating a smaller specimen of the same species. He also reports that a specimen of this species laid two eggs - as yet unhatched.

A South Australian member, Mr. B. Mules of 9 Daly Street, Kurralta Park, S.A. 5037 is interested in corresponding with N.S.W. members on observations etc relating to the relatively different ecological niches for reptiles in N.S.W. and S.A. His main interests are the small species of *Amphibolurus* and *Tymanocryptis*, also skinks.

Another report on feeding habits from Jack Verhagen involving a small-eyed snake which devoured a Swamp Snake. The same specimen, when caught originally, disgorged a scaly-foot lizard.

Sue Huddy reports that her Fraser's flap-footed lizards have a liking for the moisture from soft fruits such as ripe banana, watermelon, tomato and will even eat small pieces. They will sometimes stay up to 20 minutes licking up the juice.

Please note that all subscriptions for the current year are now due - \$4.00 for seniors and \$1.00 for juniors.

THE AUSTRALIAN HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

This Society was formed to enable people interested in reptiles and herpetology to meet regularly together.

The aims of the Society are:-

- (1) To collect and exchange information on all aspects of Australian reptiles and amphibians.
- (2) To encourage the study of reptiles and amphibians - both in their natural state and in captivity.
- (3) To promote a sane and reasonable attitude to reptiles and amphibians among the general public.
- (4) To organise field work in all parts of Australia and to render all possible assistance to members on collecting trips away from their home territory.

Authors of articles contained in the Journal are responsible for the opinions expressed and for the accuracy of the facts in their contributions.

